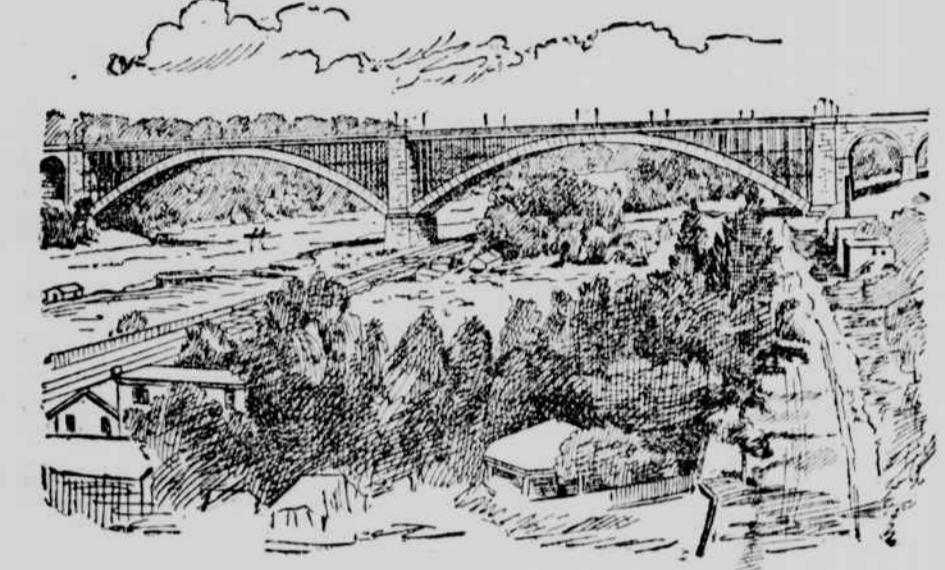


NOT WORTH ITS GREAT COST.
SCANDALS CONNECTED WITH WASHINGTON BRIDGE.

NEW-YORK TAX PAYERS HAVE SELDOM HAD TO PAY FOR A LESS USEFUL AND MORE EXPENSIVE PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT.

There is probably no other city in the world where all sorts of rascality and plunder are permitted, where it is simply a question between taxpayers and those who rob them, to such an alarming degree as in New York. It is not at all difficult to point to at least a score of glaring incidents in which the pocketbooks of the taxpayers have been materially flattened through what have been termed public improvements, but which in reality were designed and carried out for dishonest purposes. About the time each year when taxes are due, the heart of the property-owner is made sad by the size of the bills presented to him for payment. He then groans within himself, and uses strong language for awhile, but ends with paying the bills and forgetting all about them. A few months afterward, when asked to unite in some political movement to rid the city of the officials whose reckless hands are responsible for much of the burden of taxation, the outraged citizen of tax-paying time shrugs his shoulders and declares that he can more easily pay the added taxes each year than devote any time to politics. It is just such disregard of the politics of this city that has allowed such schemes as the Washington Bridge over the Harlem to be foisted upon the taxpayers.

The history of this bridge is replete with evidence of the lengths to which some men can go to advance their own private enterprises. The cuts of the structure which appear with this article give an excellent idea of the magnitude of the

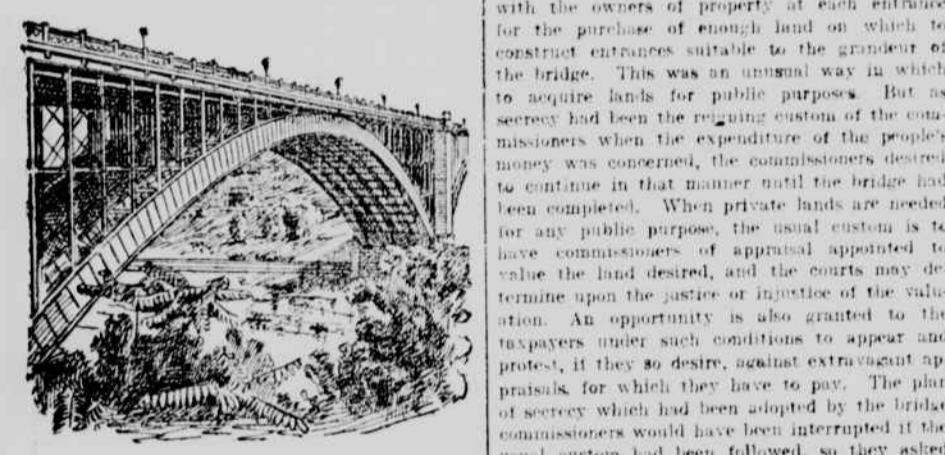


THE TWO ARCHES.

work and an inkling, perhaps, of what the expense to complete it has been. There are, however, two great faults to be found with it, and they alone should have been sufficient in the beginning to defeat the designs of those who were responsible for the scheme. One of these objections is the location, and the other is the great cost of the bridge.

The Washington Bridge spans the Harlem at One-hundred-and-eighty-first-st., from Amsterdam Avenue, on the west side of the river, to Boscombe Avenue, on the east side. From it there can be obtained an excellent view up the river, which winds slowly along the deep valley until lost to sight among the highlands. On either side of the valley, the sloping sides of which are covered with foliage, one may see the gable-roofs of perhaps a dozen fine houses among the trees. The broad walks across the bridge are much liked by lovers, for so few people use them that there is frequently almost complete solitude on the great span. With High Bridge only three blocks away, there is an excellent opportunity for the lover of the grand and beautiful in bridge architecture to study the two styles of which these structures are examples. But for practical uses the Washington Bridge might just as well have remained a dream in the designer's brain. Few go near it except out of curiosity or for pleasure, and if tolls were charged to those who use it as a convenience for trucking, not enough would be collected to pay a nightwatchman.

The country for a considerable distance around it is practically unsettled and most of the trucking done there comes up Tenth-ave. anyway.



THE RIVER SPAN.

Once in awhile a delivery wagon, with orders for some of the wealthy residents on the east side of the bridge, crosses, but that is all.

ITS REAL MISSION FULFILLED.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the bridge has fulfilled the mission which it was intended to fill when the originator got the Legislature of 1885 to pass a bill making provisions for doing the work. This mission was the improvement of the Ogden estate, and from a business point of view it would have been much cheaper and far less disgraceful if the city authorities had bought outright a large share of the estate in place of paying out the money for the bridge, solely to improve the adjacent property.

When the Ogden estate went into the hands of an executor, property in that part of the city was not very valuable. This section of the city was too far away from anything and anybody. The difficulties in the way of reaching it were such that the real estate speculators did not look upon the land with any great favor. The bridge has removed the difficulties, and now the Tenth-ave. cable road and the bridge place the land within a two-hours' ride of the City Hall. The property has therefore increased in value.

The public history of this bridge runs back to 1885. How long the scheme had been hatching in the fertile brain of its promoter, none but that man probably knows. But in that year State Senator Plunkitt, who then represented the Xth Senate District at Albany, introduced the bill in the Legislature. Senator Plunkitt is a Tammany Hall man, with a legislative record on a par with that of a majority of those who are sent from this city to represent Tammany and misrepresent their constituents in Albany. Coming from Senator Plunkitt the bill met with a good deal of close scrutiny and much opposition. Its provisions were about as far-reaching and limitless as the average Tammany man's political conscience would allow, and under them the commission to be appointed to do the work had practically unlimited power. The only safeguard existing between the taxpayers and the greedy contractors who stood ready to grab what they could out of it was the honesty of the three commissioners who were to be appointed to do this work. The Commissioners were to be appointed by the

Mayer, Controller and President of the Board of Aldermen.

In spite of the vigorous opposition which the bill met with on every hand, it went through the Legislature as though the wheels which bore it had been liberally coated with the finest kind of lubricating oil. Whether the scheme was "kissed" through or not, only those who were influential in passing it knew. At any rate, it passed, and went to the Governor on June 11, 1885. Governor Hill has all along shown a considerable sympathy for the bridges and other public "improvements," when supported by certain people, and this bill became a law.

When it became known that the Plunkitt bill had become a law, strenuous measures were adopted to prevent, if possible, anything being done under it. Ex-Mayor Grace, who was then Mayor, vigorously protested against the outrage, and in repeated interviews said that the scheme was put through only to increase the value of certain uptown property. All through the summer of 1885 the Harlem Bridge job was an interesting topic of conversation. The Mayor, the Controller and the President of the Board of Aldermen finally appointed Jacob Lorillard, V. M. Brown and David James King the commissioners to do the work. Plans and specifications were sent in and the estimates ran from \$1,120,000 to \$2,685,000. The commissioners engaged an expensive set of offices in the Cotton Exchange, hired clerks and engineers, and set about the work of getting the plans together, although the question as to where they should get money had yet to be satisfactorily settled. The commissioners decided upon the plan which consumed the larger sum of money, and in January of the next year, in secret session, signed contracts for that amount. They made every effort to hide from the public what they had done, and were greatly angered when The Tribune exposed their doings. Robert Ray Hamilton tried to pass a bill during the session of 1888 repealing the law under

which it was, which is likely to continue the Commission in power for some time to come. The constitutional point raised is such a difficult one that it is difficult to understand how a lawyer and a legislator of many years experience could overlook it. It only serves to illustrate the tendency of Timothy J. Campbell's celebrated remark, that "a little thing like the Constitution should not stand between friends," and the blind obedience to orders which the average Tammany legislator gives.

Section 17 of Article 3 of the State Constitution reads:

"No act shall be passed which shall provide

that any existing law, or any part thereof,

shall enact that any existing law, or any part

thereof, shall be applicable, except by inserting

it in such act."

In Section 2 of the laws of 1889, this article of the Constitution is again re-enacted, by declaring that condemnation proceedings for this bridge shall be had in accordance with the law of 1883 (the Aqueduct Act).

The chapter of the laws of 1883 to which reference is had is not inserted as the Constitution demands.

The point was raised by Corporation Counsel Clark, recently, when presenting his bill in court to have condemned the award made by the commissioners.

The differences over the dividing of the Cheshborough estate, if the commissioners had taken the land, would have led the city into an endless series of costly lawsuits, and it was decided that the better policy would be to take the land through condemnation proceedings and then let the contesting parties owners fight it out among themselves for their own expense.

This is about the first instance in all the history of the bridge when a desire to have money seemed to influence the commissioners in the slightest degree.

Opinions on the point raised have been filed by the Corporation Counsel, by Mr. Hotchkiss, a lawyer representing the property-owners, and by Malcolm W. Nixon, the secretary of the Bridge Commission, with Judge Andrews, of the Supreme Court.

While the lawyers are arguing points in the law, the commissioners' guardian, the Commissioner of Parks, has turned over to the Park Department, it remains in the eyes of the law an unfinished piece of work.

The commissioners could tomorrow close it up and prevent travel across

it. People who use the bridge now do so at their own risk, and although there is probably no immediate danger of its collapsing down, a sign at the west entrance informs people that they use the bridge at their own peril.

The Commissioners have no power to spend one cent of money for maintenance, and should the legal fight last many years, when the Park Department is finally charged with its keeping, a mass of rusty iron and stone will be turned over to it.

The commissioners have kindly allowed the public to use the bridge, however, and for this every one should feel devoutly thankful.

The entire cost of the structure, up to this time, exclusive of office expenses, has been \$2,673,601.00, with office expenses added, legal costs paid, more land purchased and the work of grading and terracing completed, New-York City will have an expensive luxury, for which not much use will be found for many years to come, other than as a promenade.

ON THE ST. LAWRENCE.

HEAVY RAINS AND STEEPING WINDS AT THE THOUSAND ISLANDS.

Thousand Island Park, Aug. 2 (special)—Beautiful weather continued on the river during the early part of the week, but rain and heavy winds have compelled the islanders to seek shelter for the last two or three days.

The Rev. Dr. Bright, of New York, with his family, is occupying his cottage at Round Island. Dr. Bright is the proprietor of "The Examiner," the well known advocate of the Baptist Church.

Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Meyers, of New York, accompanied by their two sons, have arrived at the islands for the season. Mr. Meyers is a member of the New York Stock Exchange.

Professor Louis Lomax, the director of the Utica Conservatory of Music, has been spending a few days at the islands.

K. H. Hinckley, son of Senator Frank Hinckley, is now at the islands.

More New-York and Brooklyn people are visiting the Thousand Island Park this season than in any previous year since its existence as a summer resort.

Mr. and Mrs. L. C. Delmonico, of New York, are staying at the Thousand Island House.

John K. Shaw, a wealthy coal dealer of Brooklyn, is on the river for a few days.

The annual meeting of the Adirondack Association will be held at Clayton, Aug. 5.

Among the arrivals from New-York and vicinity

of which the commissioners were acting, but he was unsuccessful. The friends of the scheme rallied around it and were able to defeat Mr. Hamilton's bill.

In the meantime Mayor Grace had met with a change of heart, and either became convinced that the bridge was an excellent thing or it was not such a great imposition after all.

NO ESCAPE FOR THE TAX-PAYERS.

The men who framed the law were shrewd enough to see to it that there was no loophole through which the city could escape.

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In 1888, when the structure was nearing completion, a bill appeared in Albany giving the commissioners the power to arrange privately with the owners of property at each entrance for the purchase of enough land on which to construct entrances suitable to the grandeur of the bridge. This was an unusual way in which to acquire lands for public purposes. But as secrecy had been the ruling custom of the commissioners when the expenditure of the people's money was concerned, the commissioners decided to continue in that manner until the bridge had been completed. When private lands are needed for any public purpose, the usual custom is to have commissioners of appraisal appointed to value the land desired, and the courts may determine upon the justice or injustice of the valuation. An opportunity is also granted to the taxpayers under such conditions to appear and protest, if they so desire, against extravagant appraisals for which they have to pay. The plan of secrecy which had been adopted by the bridge commissioners would have been interrupted if the usual custom had been followed, so they asked to buy land at private sale.

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The plan required from the Ogden estate is now being worked upon by a large gang of men, who are blasting and drilling the rocks, of which most of it is composed, preparatory to laying it out in accordance with the plans in the commissioners' hands. The plans provide for a series of large terraces, on which will be walks and promenades, toas, and waterfalls.

With the property owners on the west side of the river, the commissioners were not so successful as they were in striking a bargain with the executor of the Ogden estate, and they have gotten into a legal squabble, the settlement of which may extend their term for some time to come. If this had not arisen the commissioners had hopes of getting through their work by January 1 next.

CHEAPER THAN THE EAST SIDE.

Most of the land on the West Side of the river, which the commissioners want, belongs to the Cheshborough estate. The price fixed for it was \$150,000, \$28,000 less than the amount paid to the Ogden estate, although there are no noisy railroad trains rushing by it constantly. But when the commissioners came to turn over the money, trouble arose steeped in with the claim that their land extended into property which the representatives of the Cheshborough estate were to sell to the commissioners. A bill was therefore prepared by the commissioners, and was sent to Albany, where it was introduced by Senator Ives. The bill passed, and became a law, but an important constitutional objection has been

found in it, which is likely to continue the Commission in power for some time to come. The constitutional point raised is such a difficult one that it is difficult to understand how a lawyer and a legislator of many years experience could overlook it.

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that "a little thing like the Constitution should not stand between friends," and the blind obedience to orders which the average Tammany legislator gives.

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the commissioners' guardian, the Commissioner of Parks, has turned over to the Park Department, it remains in the eyes of the law an unfinished piece of work.

People who use the bridge now do so at their own risk,

and although there is probably no immediate danger of its collapsing down, a sign at the west entrance informs people that they use the bridge at their own peril.

The Commissioners have no power to spend one cent of money for maintenance,

and should the legal fight last many years, when the Park Department is finally charged with its keeping, a mass of rusty iron and stone will be turned over to it.

The commissioners have kindly allowed the public to use the bridge, however, and for this every one should feel devoutly thankful.

The entire cost of the structure, up to this time, exclusive of office expenses, has been \$2,673,601.00, with office expenses added, legal costs paid, more land purchased and the work of grading and terracing completed, New-York City will have an expensive luxury, for which not much use will be found for many years to come, other than as a promenade.

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